## COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

## **NEWS RELEASE**

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## COUNTY LAUNCHES HOUSING MATTERS CAMPAIGN

Campaign Aims to Reduce Homelessness, Stigma and Housing Discrimination

Understanding that having a stable place to live is the first step to recovery from a mental disorder, the San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) today launched an education campaign that aims to erase stigma and housing discrimination against people with a mental illness.

The *Housing Matters* campaign also hopes to reduce homelessness by placing people with a mental disorder in supportive housing where they can receive treatment for their illness and get services to help them address other underlying problems that contributed to their being on the streets.

"Having a permanent place to live is the first step for the recovery process to begin," said Nick Macchione, HHSA Director. "Having supportive housing allows people with a mental illness to receive medical and mental health treatment, as well as social services to help them thrive."

Mental illness is a major cause of homelessness. There are about 8,500 homeless people in the San Diego region; about 25 percent of them suffer from a mental disorder. Often, people with mental illness face discrimination when looking for a place to live.

Starting today, radio, television and print ads highlighting the benefits of supportive housing will appear throughout the region. Funding for the campaign, which will run through June 2015, comes from the Mental Health Services Act or Prop. 63, a millionaires' tax that specifically designates funds for mental health services. The measure was approved by California voters in 2004.

Supportive housing is a community-based service model that, in addition to housing and mental health services, also offers training and assists people to get jobs. While in supportive housing, clients tend to take better care of themselves which may include the discontinuation of alcohol/drug abuse.

Studies have shown that a chronically homeless individual could use as much as \$42,000 in public services and emergency care each year. In supportive housing, the cost for treating that individual drops to about \$16,000 or less.

"Mental illnesses can be treated," said Dr. Piedad García, Director of HHSA's Adult and Older Adult Mental Health Services. "We need to get homeless people into supportive housing so that they can get the treatment they need."

For more information about the *Housing Matters* campaign, visit <u>www.HousingMattersSD.org</u>.

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